

Conclusion: Beyond the Border Issue



Border signs between Manzhouli and Zabaikal'sk (Jul., 1998)

1 Shanghai Rhapsody

The Sino-Soviet Western Border

On the night of December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned as the president of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union ceased to exist when the Russian three-colored national flag was raised in the Kremlin. Then, Chinese officials in the Foreign Ministry must have had some concerns over future border negotiations on the former Sino-Soviet border.

The frontier that the Chinese and Russians had battled to keep under their own control was not limited to the eastern border from North Korea to Mongolia. The Sino-Soviet border also consisted of a western part, a 3,200 kilometer border from the western edge of Mongolia to Afghanistan. In the Gorbachev era, China and the Soviets had negotiated on the entire border line in a package deal. China began to foresee trouble with future negotiations when the bargaining partner suddenly divided into four countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the western border was subdivided into four sections, with 50 kilometers going to Russia, 1,700 kilometers to Kazakhstan, 1,000 kilometers to Kyrgyzstan, and 430 kilometers to Tajikistan.

As mentioned before, the Sino-Soviet border was decided mainly on the basis of treaties and agreements in the nineteenth century. China repeatedly claims that it lost some "one and half million square kilometers of its own territory" according to these "unequal" treaties. This includes the loss of 600,000 square kilometers in the Aigun Treaty, a little less than 400,000 square kilometers in the Beijing Treaty on the eastern border, and a little over 500,000 square kilometers on the western border. The loss of the western border included 440,000 square kilometers in the Tarbagatai Agreement of 1864, 70,000 square kilometers in the Ili Agreement of 1881, and an indefinite area through concessions in the Pamirs in 1884.

In fact, the Sino-Soviet western border problem has the same historic roots as its eastern border. When the Chinese nationalist movements against the Soviet Union like the Damanskii Incident occurred during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, skirmishes were repeated on the western border. Conflicts on the western bor-

der with many nationalities living in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region seriously damaged Chinese interests. Generally speaking, if a "simple game" of two great powers, e.g. China and Russia, were played (the main axis) on the eastern border, a complex situation, involving various nationalities, on the western border would arise. Though the main battlefield between China and the Soviet Union was on the eastern border during the Cold War period (particularly during the Cultural Revolution), this could move against the integrity of China or Russia in some cases, and disturb the stability and power relations of the two great powers.

Formula of "Four Plus One"

As mentioned before, the Sino-Soviet "reconciliation" was brought about because of Gorbachev's initiative in resolving the territorial issue, and at the same time measures for stabilizing the border area were also proposed, such as management of Sino-Soviet conflict on the border. This resulted in the signing of the agreement on reduction of forces and measures for confidence building on the border area in April 1990. Paralleling this agreement, negotiations over the western border had continued. Just after that, the Soviet Union suddenly ceased to exist.

The Sino-Soviet border changed when the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991. The western part was divided into four sections: Sino-Russian, Kazakh-Chinese, Kyrgyz-Chinese, and Tajik-Chinese. At the time, the newly independent Central Asian states not only recognized the existence of the territorial issue, but agreed to come to the negotiating table through Russian mediation (Liu Dexi 1996: 180). The "Four (Russia and three Central Asian countries) plus One (China)" negotiation formula was created by the Sino-Russian "partnership" in due observance of the Sino-Russian border agreements. After 1993, the "Four plus One" formula led to the formation of two regular committees — for confidence-building and arms reduction and for joint boundary demarcation — which later became founding members of the so-called "Shanghai Five" (Sun Zhuangzhi 1999: 204-206).

The first fruit borne by the committee for confidence-building and arms reduction was the Shanghai Agreement on confidence-

building in the military field in the border area in 1996. All concerned states agreed to stabilize their border areas by establishing demilitarized zones and by promising to exchange sensitive military information. This was a dubious but effective symbol of peace on the former Sino-Soviet border, which had been historically plagued by severe military conflicts and deep-rooted mutual distrust (Krasnaia zvezda Apr. 30, 1996). Since then, "Shanghai" has acquired the special meaning of "stability and trust" for the five countries. In February 1997, when the leaders of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined in Moscow and signed the agreement on mutual reduction of armed forces in the border area, the level of "stability and trust" between the concerned parties was upgraded by the agreement for the limitation of arms and personnel within a 100 kilometer zone of the former Sino-Soviet border and by the mutual inspection of it (Sbornik 1999: 385-392). The name "Shanghai Five" became popular just after this second summit.

A Deal for the Border Demarcation

The "Four plus One" formula advanced the progress of border demarcation on the western border. In 1994, the Sino-Russian 50 kilometer border and the Kazakh-Chinese border were agreed upon, with two small sections of the latter border undecided. In 1998, when the third "Shanghai Five" summit was held in Almaty, a major city in Kazakhstan, they finally resolved them in the Kazakh-Chinese supplemental agreement (Inside Central Asia Mar. 8-14, 1999). Kyrgyz-Chinese border negotiations had begun in 1992, and at that time, there were five disputed sections, four of which were resolved in the 1996 agreement. The remaining one, the western point near Mt. Khantengri, was demarcated in 1999. The Kyrgyz-Chinese supplemental agreement was signed during the fourth summit of the "Shanghai Five" held in Bishkek (Slovo Kyrgyzstana Aug. 27, 1999).

In contrast, Tajik-Chinese border negotiations had been in deadlock for a long time. Because the disputed area claimed by China is more than 20,000 square kilometers, or one-seventh of all Tajikistan territory, both governments seemed to have little room to compromise. The only section they agreed on at the Dushanbe Summit

of the "Shanghai Five" in 2000 was the Kyrgyz-Tajik-Chinese joint border point. Life is always full of unexpected twists, however. Jiang Zemin and Rakhmonov signed a supplementary agreement on the border issues on May 17, 2002. According to the People's Daily, "China and Tajikistan both highly appreciate the agreement reached on border issues, saying this signifies a comprehensive resolution of border issues left between the two countries" (People's Daily May 18, 2002). The Tajikistan Central News Agency reported that Tajikistan agreed to turn about 3.5 percent of the disputed territory back to China, which amounts to approximately 1,000 square kilometers, in order to end the border dispute between China and Tajikistan (BBC monitoring May 21, 2002). It is difficult to confirm the actual content of the agreement because none of the Tajik and Chinese media reported it. There are even a few Chinese and Tajik specialists who suggest that the territory handed over to China was not 1,000 but 4,000 square kilometers. Nevertheless, concerned specialists almost universally agree that the territorial issue between Tajikistan and China has been resolved. This is a historic event for finalizing all the territorial problems of the former Sino-Soviet western border.

The Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The cooperation of the "Shanghai Five" developed through the border arrangement doubtlessly has contributed to the great success in regional security, particularly in Sino-Russian security, which has yet to be declared a political problem. The "Shanghai Five" entered into a new phase at the Almaty Summit in 1998 in terms of both quality and quantity. The summit began to be held regularly every year and broadened the scope of cooperation between member states. The "Shanghai Five" put a few new items on their agenda of mutual security: "combating separatism, religious extremism and international terrorism" (Renmin ribao Jul. 4, 1998). At the Bishkek summit in 1999, the leaders agreed to recognize the threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" and declared their criticism of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia as "humanitarian interference" from the outside in domestic matters. This trend was accelerated mainly by Russia and China; both states needed support for their respective government's policy for repressing its "domestic minority problems," i.e. Chech-

nya and the Uygurs. Since the end of 1997, when Juma Naman-gani's "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" developed in Central Asia, Central Asian states have also had serious concerns regarding "Islamic fundamentalism," which is seen as a common threat to the security of the "Shanghai Five." In addition, they began to pay closer attention to economic cooperation, such as "the revival of the Silk Road" (Slovo Kyrgyzstana Aug. 26, 1999).

In 2000, the Fifth summit in Dushanbe pushed these new items forward. First, the "Shanghai Five" decided to establish an international organization for regional security and cooperation, which would be open to its neighboring states. Second, Uzbekistan, which was considered a top candidate for full membership in the planned organization, attended this summit as an observer.

The "Shanghai Five" often portrays itself as a new model of regional cooperation, which aims to produce good neighborly relations, mutual trust, equality and common development neither allied nor antagonistic against a third party. Its basic premise is to preserve the integrity of its member states, which share common interests for combating "separatist" movements within their states and preventing outside interference, mainly by "Islamic fundamentalism." It also means that the concerned parties would never support their own "minorities" in other member states. In this context, Uzbekistan's position was very important for the "Shanghai Five," because future security and the integrity of member states in the region would not be guaranteed without Uzbekistan's commitment to the partnership.

In June 2001, leaders of the "Shanghai Five" and the Uzbek president met in Shanghai to declare the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and signed the convention for combating "terrorism, separatism, and extremism," which included the establishment of a regional anti-terrorism structure within the SCO with its headquarters in Bishkek.¹⁷ A month later, Russia and China signed a landmark Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship

17 Islam Karimov had a positive attitude toward the structure and invited it to Tashkent after the SCO summit on May 29, 2003, while keeping a cautious eye on the SCO (RFE/RL NEWSLINE Jun. 3, 2003). Then, at a SCO Foreign Minister meeting it was suddenly decided to set it not in Bishkek but in Tashkent on September 5, 2003 (RFE/RL NEWSLINE Sept. 8, 2003).

and Cooperation, which would cement Sino-Russian border stability and cooperation.

Despite the existence of differences between the members' interests, we should never ignore a major achievement of the SCO: the SCO almost resolved the most challenging issues between the former Soviet Union and China; confidence-buliding measures and demarcation in the border areas. Concerning the "terrorist issue," the SCO is doubtlessly one of the organizations which could coordinate its activities within the member states, and could assist in — or counter — any action for "eliminating terrorism" by other organizations and states. The SCO has served as and will continue to function as a subsidiary organ, even if in limited capacity, for regional security and stability. This is the conclusion that I would like to emphasize.

2 A Safety Net

Economic Interdependence

Readers who read the main chapters understand how superficial the Sino-Russian "strategic partnership" really is, and in fact is a kind of quasi-military organization acting as a counter-bloc against the U.S. This is also true for the SCO. This explanation turns things upside down. The Sino-Russian "partnership" was not influenced so much by outside factors, but rather it has been developed during the process of overcoming many challenges, particularly those that have occurred on the border area. The Sino-Russian "partnership," based on the previous successful results for resolving problems in relations, should be prominently positioned within the Asian and Eurasian context of the twenty-first century.

On the other hand, the border is even now threatened by "issues" not easily resolved, as analyzed above. Here we come back to the journey along the eastern border, and check some safety nets for stabilizing the border area.

In the late 1990s, when Sino-Russian economic relations, including trade, had deteriorated against the rosy image of the "partnership," a debate among Chinese scholars ensued. Shi Ze, then a famous specialist on Russia at the Institute for International Studies under the Chinese Foreign Ministry, argued that the argument for

"politics and economy as a double wheel for the partnership" was misleading. "If the economy were bad, it would not necessarily have a negative effect on politics; consider the example of Sino-U.S relations. Economic relations are better, though political relations are worse. Even if economic relations are underdeveloped, the Sino-Russian political relations could go forward." Lu Nanquan, a leading economist at the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, criticized such a politics-centered view. He argued that such a partnership would be dangerous in the future without economic substance.

This is a typical discussion on interdependence in international relations. It is usually said that if two or more states shared mutual economic interests, the threat of war would be significantly reduced. But this does not mean that conflicts would disappear completely, and, in turn, daily, but not so serious, conflicts could increase owing to this interdependence (Tanaka 1996: 148). Considering the realities of the Sino-Russian "partnership," Shi Ze's appeal should be understood as a "political" message. As economic issues are not the topic of this book, I do not refer to them, but both Chinese and Russian leaders are always concerned with the economic relations trailing behind political cooperation. It is well-known that Premier Chernomyrdin chanted a slogan for "20 billion dollars of trade volume by 2000" on his visit to Beijing in June, 1997. This discussion has little meaning nowadays. The sum of Sino-Russian trade reached \$8 billion in 2000, exceeding the previous record set in the 1990s, \$7.7 billion in 1993, and increased to \$10.7 billion in 2001, \$11 billion in 2002 and \$15.6 billion in 2003. Russian Premier Mikhail Kasianov talked enthusiastically about the "\$30 billion in the next ten years" in Shanghai at the end of August 2002 (BBC Monitoring Aug. 23, 2002). Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji responded that Sino-Russian cooperation is going to be widened into all areas of industry and technology: power engineering, development of natural resources and their use, nuclear energy, finance, transportation, space exploration, aviation, environmental security and intelligence technology (BBC Monitoring Aug. 21, 2002).

Here we again consider how economic cooperation could contribute to the stability of the border area. Economic interdependence on

the Sino-Russian border area is related to energy projects and arms sales, with border trade being the exception. A typical energy project on the border is the Kovykta gas project, on which a choice of pipeline route, directly to China or through Mongolia, is in competition with each other. Regardless of the final decision, the gas pipeline will have to go through Inner Mongolia. In Chapter 6, I introduced an oil pipeline project which had a positive effect on local border cooperation between Manzhouli and Zabaikal'sk, though it was considerably smaller than the Kovykta project. The Kovykta project is large, with some \$10 billion needed for constructing the pipeline and developing a gas bed. However, some 20 billion cubic meters of gas resources per year are said to be available, enough to meet the demands of China and South Korea for 30 years. If it were to succeed, Sino-Russian energy interdependence will be dramatically deepened. Such big projects, including the Angarsk oil pipeline project, could realistically contribute to the stabilization of the border zone.

In contrast, the arms sales issue is discussed with some difficulties. At a time of nuclear weapons and the militarization of space, the border no longer seems to play a key role in terms of security. A war between great powers with nuclear weapons and long projection capabilities is far beyond border problems. On the other hand, border conflicts between neighboring countries do not end. Particularly, border conflicts between nuclear powers are potentially the most dangerous in the world, e.g. India and Pakistan. Both Russia and China were on the edge of a nuclear war in the late 1960s and potentially face the same threat even today. Now China and Russia share mutually supplemental relations in arms deals. While Russia sells kilo-class submarines and Sukhoi 27 fighter jets to earn foreign currency, China needs to buy them to build up its forces for deterrence against increased U.S. pressure. Russia, however, should be wary of China's increasing military ability for its own security, and should put limits on the transfer of its newest technology and fighter jets, Sukhoi MKI, which was only transferred to India, not to China.

Arms sales are an influential factor of the Khabarovsk economy. The production line for Sukhoi fighter jets operates in Komso-mol'sk-na-Amure in Khabarovsk Krai. This fighter jet factory is the largest not only in the Russian Far East, but also in the Asia Pacific

Region. Its main product is the Sukhoi 27 and its upgraded fighter jets. The first order from China was 40 Sukhoi 27, at \$30 million per plane; later a licensing contract was issued to China. China has produced Sukhoi 27 SK fighter jets, an upgraded version of the Sukhoi 27, in a factory in Shenyang in Liaoning Province since 1998. According to some sources, Russia, in turn, received \$650 million for the license and technical documents and \$850 million for the production equipment. Russia also exported 20 Sukhoi 30 MKK fighter jets in 2000 and 28 MK2 fighter jets, an upgraded version of the MKK, in 2002. The latter deal was estimated to be worth \$1.2 billion (Sankei Shimbun Aug. 2, 2002).

The sale of arms, indeed, not only concerns the central government, but the local regions as well. The economic effect on local economies cannot be ignored. As trade statistics vis-à-vis China in Khabarovsk Krai fluctuate on a yearly basis, the dilemma between economy and security in the border region is notable. Putting the sale of arms in an interdependence context, we find positive aspects on the border area. The successive purchase of arms by China could enhance mutual dependence with Russia in personnel training, parts supplying, and maintenance of military cooperation during times of peace.

Strategic Partnership of Border Regions

A key point for enhancing interdependence on the border region is the promotion of trade, investment and joint venturing between local enterprises and administrations. In comparison with the restoration of trade volume in recent years, Sino-Russian joint ventures and Chinese investments in the Russian Far East remain low. For an illustration, the following is the total accumulation of Chinese investment up to the beginning of 2002: \$8.1 million in Primor'e Krai, and \$7.4 million in Khabarovsk Krai; only \$490,000 in the former and 200,000 in the latter in 2001.¹⁸ I listened to an interesting conversation between Pavel Minakir, Director of the Economic Research Institute in Khabarovsk, and Zhao Lizhi, Director of the Institute for Siberian Studies of Heilongjiang Province Academy, at a

18 The data are yet to be published in full but are available in part in a paper presented by Li Chuanxun at the Slavic Research Center (Li Chuanxun 2003).

symposium held in Heilongjiang University in June 2002. Minakir asked, "Why don't the Chinese invest much in the Far East? If they hesitate to do so, what is the reason?" Zhao answered, "This is because there is a lack of mutual confidence between China and Russia." Minakir immediately continued, "At the bottom of mutual confidence in the early 1990s, the Sino-Russian economic cooperation had peaked. If mutual interests exist, economic relations can go forward even if there were a lack of confidence." I agree with Minakir's opinion. Economists should discuss only economic matters.

In this context, Shi Ze's comments, as mentioned before, could be interpreted in the following way: even if economic relations were to improve, political relations would not without mutual endeavors. I have already stated Chapter 1 that daily conflicts at local levels have increased and been politicized to maximum levels, despite the border region both in China and Russia supplementing its economic needs during the "border boom" in the early 1990s. Then, except for a few places on the border, mutual confidence was lacking; after Moscow's strong "intervention," most conflicts were barely avoided. In short, daily care of small "conflicts" on the border area is vital to stabilizing the border itself. Local administrations, some branches of the Border Guard, customs, security organs and all concerned authorities should play a greater role in creating a safety net. That is, economic and political interdependence.

3 Verbal Politics

Beyond "Shuttle Traders"

It is clear that creating a partnership between Chinese and Russian local bodies and residents on the border area is not an easy task. Particularly, before the declaration on the finishing of the demarcation work on the Sino-Russian eastern border in November 1997, a factual basis for the partnership did not exist, with the exception being Chita - Inner Mongolia relations. In this sense, it is a mere symbolic gesture that an agreement for a border partnership between Sino-Russian local bodies was signed simultaneously with the declaration. Readers should also understand that local partnerships over the



Russian border ship coming from Kazakevichevo Village on the Ussuri
(Wusuzhen, Aug., 2001)



Handshaking between border guards (Wusuzhen, Aug., 2001)

border have been formed at various levels since then. I think that the main factor that has long disturbed Sino-Russian relations from going forward and developing was the mutual distrust between Russia and China that had accumulated during the long years of border conflict. If Zhao's assertions were applied to politics (e.g. "lack of confidence between them"), it would be completely true.

We can get a better understanding of the mutual distrust from various Russian or Chinese phrases. The Chinese call shuttle trade "civil trade," which they consider as a tool for boosting their economy. On the other hand, the Russians despise shuttle trading and refer to it as "chelnoki," a term of contempt. The difference is very significant. Although China has actively pushed the shuttle trade forward, the Russian authorities dislike the tax exemption status given to shuttle traders at the customs, because the shuttle traders carried goods as "souvenirs." They argued that the shuttle traders were tax evaders, and imposed a decree limiting "carried" goods to 50 kilograms in 1996. At the same time, excessive regulations on "chelnoki" hurt local residents, who suffered from a shortage of cheap foods and commodities in Russian markets. Then, local businesspersons applied themselves to the new conditions, and the "lantern" was conceived in Blagoveshchensk.

Conflict of interests between Moscow and locals are seen elsewhere. For example, income generated from the railway customs in Zabaikal'sk is reportedly absorbed by the central government. Increasing the volume of cargo through the customs never confers any direct benefit to villages on the border. Conversely, as the creation of a "free trade zone" or a "joint economic zone" would not realize a direct profit for Moscow, Moscow does not have a strong interest in it. Apart from a "Chinese threat," the economic barrier is constituted on the border area.

In the early 1990s, Russia regulated "civil trade," linking it to the threat of "Chinese expansion." Readers should keep in mind the introduction of the visa regime for Chinese and the operations against "illegal" foreigners. Of course, these measures were partly requested by the local administration, but the reaction was not monolithic but diversified: Ussuriisk City, highly dependent on the Chinese market, criticized Vladivostok's severe control of it; Amur

Oblast and Chita Oblast, whose economies could not be stabilized without China, sometimes demand that visa control of the Chinese be retracted. By sustaining the fear of a "Chinese threat," Moscow's ignorance of the various border regions and cities remained a political barrier. Sensational reports of "Chinese migrations" may have already fallen into a political trap.

Moscow vs. the Far East

There is an interesting spectacle in Moscow and in the Far East. Once in the early 1990s, specialists criticized Moscow's indifference toward the border and the oversensationalized "Chinese threat." Now they do not oversensationalize the "Chinese threat." A typical case is Viktor Larin. He was once one of the harshest critics of China, but now objectively evaluates the results of the resolution of the border disputes and has calmed down some of his eccentric arguments against "Chinese migration." The mere existence of his opinion seems an important drag on the Primor'e, where traditionally anti-Chinese feelings are the strongest.

In contrast, specialists in Moscow and the non-border regions have harsh views of China. For example, Vilia Gel'bras's opinion on the migration issue seems to arise from a deep distrust of the Chinese. Gel'bras, a respected academic, started a widespread rumor that about a million Chinese were living in Russia as a demagogy. Nevertheless, he adds that the 200,000 Chinese living in Russia was "forty times" higher than during the whole Soviet period, and represented a potential threat (Gel'bras 2001: 40; 120-123). An Irkutsk specialist, Victor Diatlov, appealed to the central government's serious approach for controlling Chinese migration (Diatlov 2000: 180-190). Such a pessimistic view on migration is not necessarily accepted by most specialists in the Far East.¹⁹

Gelbras's objective analysis of the migration issue suddenly turns eccentric on other issues. For example, he, not once referring

19 At a conference in Kyoto, held in November 2002, Gel'bras's presentation on China and Chinese migration caused a heated discussion not only with Chinese scholars but also among some specialists from the Far East. Some of the latter cast doubt on the Gel'bras's acute stance toward the Chinese.



"Trade Center" (Ussuriisk, Sept., 2000)

to details of the border negotiations and demarcation works or on the recently changed border area, worries about future Chinese ambitions on Russian territory (Gel'bras 2001: 252-253). He has deep concerns about Chinese from an "invisible" place, though even he is obliged to recognize a "China town" in Ussuriisk (Gel'bras 2001: 52-53). If Larin, a specialist who knows the border well, were to change his position on the border situation vis-à-vis Chinese progress, Moscow's extremists would be put in a precarious situation. The best recipe for specialists wary of an "invisible" enemy is to invite them to the border area itself.

Beyond the "Chinese Threat"

Back to "verbal politics." The deep meaning of the words "Chinese threat" seem to be a typical case. These words were often spoken and widespread in Russia in the early 1990s. Some were wary of China's future as a military power, seeing a rapidly developing economy after Deng's "southern speech." Others were anxious about a future division of China and its disorder, foreseeing a burst of

"democratization" and "national problems" culminating in the collapse of its communist system, as in the Soviet Union.

Russia, a neighbor of China with a more than 4,000 kilometer shared border, must avoid both scenarios. In these past ten years, because China's political situation has been stabilized tentatively with its developed economy, the first scenario is emphasized. On the other hand, people in the Far East, who had experienced a mass intrusion of "Chinese businesspersons" in the early 1990s, have maintained the same scenario consistently over the past ten years: "expansion by Chinese immigrants." Then, the "Chinese threat" consisted of two problems: migration and territorial disputes. The latter was practically resolved de jure. "In-room" working, including protocol and the map of the border area, was finished at the end of April 1999. "Chinese migration" is now discussed, but it is more tightly controlled than before. For the time being, it is not a serious problem in the border area. I believe this is a realistic and well-balanced recognition of the situation.

Readers should understand how disinformation on the "Chinese threat" has distilled the Russian psyche: the Andrei Polutov and Tamara Globa's case under the auspices of Nazdratenko's anti-1991 agreement campaign in Vladivostok (Chapter 1), some rumors on the delta between the Amur and the Ussuri in Khabarovsk (Chapter 3), and so on. The rumors on the delta were recently repeated by Izvestiia, Kyodo News and other media outlets.

"Silence" also contributes to "verbal politics." Amur Oblast and Chita Oblast have maintained that their territorial disputes are not publicized. "Silence" sometimes serves politics better than disinformation, as in the Soviet period. For an illustration, consider Moscow's "silence" on the river border problem. Disinformation could be discussed whether it be true or not, but "silence" hides the facts. The importance of fact-finding is indispensable for Chinese de facto control of Damanskii and the existence of many unknown, disputed islands on the Amur and the Ussuri. A high-ranking Russian specialist listened to my presentation on island problems in the Ussuri River at a conference in Harbin; he frankly responded that the truth might not reach local residents (see xi). Even specialists understood quite well, from the severe experience brought by the

transition of the former Communist regime, the damage that would result if the "silence" were broken.

I did not dare mention military issues in this book. Some military experts may be dissatisfied with this approach. Truly, even I, as an amateur of military science, understood the weakness inherent in Russia's border security, when I saw many ruined and empty barracks in border villages and few surveillance ships on the river border. All of the border "goods" were of interest to me: military-like equipment, a disposition map on the wall of the Border Guard office, an unnaturally widened asphalt road on the border area supposedly used as a tentative airport in emergencies, military bases located under a river bank or on the top of a hill, hidden from view, the fact that the geography of the border is completely different from the maps sold in stores, and so on.

A Russian driver, accompanying me on a border trip, at least once suspected me of being a spy, while a Chinese taxi driver recognized a strategic advantage even if a war were to occur. However, a present "border trip" has no meaning in the military sense in this day of age since not only satellites but global hawks, unmanned surveillance planes, could discern a rescue boat on the river from eighteen thousand meters in the sky.

When I was asked the reason of conducting a border trip, I answered, "I only want to know the realities of the residents living in the border area between China and Russia. I hope to observe the area and analyze the construction of mutual distrust between Chinese and Russians from the neutral perspective of a third nation. If my small work on the border helps to make their relations stable and peaceful, I would consider it a great accomplishment." Therefore, I tried to synthesize all the information I had acquired over the past ten years into a comprehensive analysis on the Sino-Russian border. I consider myself a "shuttle researcher for peace."

One of the reasons to trust the academic quality of my work is that I have no relations with the "defense studies" or intelligence resources, and the sensationalistic media covering the Sino-Russian border. Therefore, my work betrays some military experts' expectations, and no secret information remains in my pockets or camera. I am also conscious of the limitations of this book. I only briefly refer to the

many other problems that exist in the border areas: the export of foreign labor, drug trafficking, mafia crimes, military conversion, environmental pollution and others. I look forward to professional works covering these issues in the Sino-Russian border area.

Table 4. Number of Islands Divided by Border Rivers

	Total	Ussuri River	Amur River	Argun River	Others
Russia	1163	167	778	204	14
China	1281	153	902	209	17
Total	2444	320	1680	413	31

4 The Neverending Story?

Tom Clancy's "The Bear and the Dragon"

Fiction loves war. President Jack Ryan, the former spy master, plays an adventure in a fictional Sino-Russia war in one of Tom Clancy's recent works. Jack, being a good friend to the Russians after his previous battles with the KGB, has yet to familiarize himself with the Chinese. In the story, stubborn Chinese communist leaders, clinging to sinocentric thoughts, invade the Russian Far East and Siberia to acquire oil and gold resources found there, leading to a war with Russia. Then, President Ryan along with the Russians wage a war against China.

Clancy's talent for finding possible war scenarios, as opposed to a mutually beneficial union between Russia and China, is undeniable, but his depiction of the actors on the political stage is amateurish. His work underestimates China's rationale, focuses too heavily on economics, and overestimates the natural resources issue, which could take China to the verge of war. The plot based on Asian alienation and the belief in the supremacy of energy control seems to be his outlook of the world. It is a simple story for every reader.

Clancy stereotypically depicts the Chinese in the latter part of the story when the Chinese Foreign Ministry complains repeatedly of American unilateral recognition of Taiwan as a state and America's "outlook on the world." The book's theme seems to be limited

to economic issues. The plot reflects Clancy's stereotypes, and it functions only as an entertaining novel. Some details in the story on high-tech weaponry and battle tactics should attract military buffs. The role of a "Japanese" spy working in a Beijing branch of NEC, in fact a Japanese American belonging to the CIA, is exotic as he plots to get secret information from a secretary of a high-ranking Chinese official. The finale is, however, romantic. Since a preemptive nuclear strike on Washington is unimaginable no counter-attack is ordered.

The End of the Scenario

The essence of the Sino-Russian border area is not necessarily outside factors, nor is it a power game to control natural resources, as Clancy suggests. The most important factor that he misses is the possibility of a coincidental war on the border and nationalistic complaints between Russians and Chinese. Particularly today, as China is growing, much attention is paid to Chinese nationalism. I have already pointed out that some Chinese leaders were dissatisfied with the Sino-Russian Treaty of 2001. They were afraid of losing the opportunity to regain the Far East in the future.

What the Chinese call an era of humiliation began in the late nineteenth century. "Restoring" Hong Kong and Macau were the first steps to restoring "lost territories" and their glorious history. The Chinese clinging to Taiwan should be understood in this context. Clancy rightly depicts China's resolve on the Taiwan issue, but he does not consider what would occur if the Taiwan issue were resolved: the Russian Far East would be "restored" by China. Therefore, a possible war was debated with China's "expansion" into the Far East in terms of "migration" or "territory." Clancy's view lacks this perspective, and does not reach beyond the realm of fiction.

"The Bear and the Dragon" would be more persuasive if the author had adopted the following plot: China, countering U.S. "dominance" of the world, superficially maintained its friendship with Russia, while some Chinese leaders plan to "restore" the Far East to avenge history. Many spies work as "businesspersons" in the Far East and prepare for "X day." Take some items of Clancy's as they are: China clinging on to its complaints regarding Taiwan's indepen-

dence, but making concessions on economic issues. Therefore, China also would keep good relations with the U.S. superficially. One day, spontaneous anti-Chinese mobs were fired on by Russians; the anti-Chinese movement became widespread over the Far East. Some Chinese riverside cities, including Heihe, were disturbed. Nationalistic wings in the Chinese leadership won and started a secret operation for "restoring" the Far East. The Chinese army proceeded toward Russia as an excuse of guaranteeing security and saving the lives of the citizens (humanitarian intervention). Russia called NATO to confront the Chinese threat...

A serious researcher should stay away from the fiction genre. Russia and China are tired of such scenarios. Russia now recognizes that threats do not necessarily only come from abroad. President Putin sees the threat of Russia's weakness, or the "poverty" of the Far East. He endeavors to stop the outflow of people from the Far East and tackle problems relating to the development of the Far East. China, in turn, show concern over Russia's attitude. To "restore" the Far East is not only unrealistic but also harmful to the security of the Chinese. Both the Russians and Chinese have not forgotten the Damanskii Incident. Chinese are more pragmatic than Clancy's plot suggests, and are respectful of Russia's history as a former super power. China and Russia know well the fragility of the border area.

My aim is not to emphasize the challenges facing Sino-Russian relations. Rather, it is to make understood a more pragmatic approach to viewing the problems surrounding Sino-Russian relations and its mutual border, and to recognize (emphasize) certain achievements.

As I pointed out in the Introduction, most observers remain at the entrance to the Sino-Russian border area or at desks far away. I advise my readers (and fellow researchers) to go and see the border themselves. The reality of the Sino-Russian border does reflect fragility, but there exist a great desire to overcome it. To discover such realities is helpful not only for China and Russia but for the whole world as well. Then, many observers would be (albeit not totally) free from discrimination and disinformation. In time, I feel that the Sino-Russian border area will, eventually, become more

open. Some Russians scoff at my romantic idea of a Sino-Russian joint excursion to Damanskii Island (see pages 89-90). After looking cautiously at the realities of the border areas, I believe my dream could be realized.

The remaining leg of my journey remains how openly Russia and China would handle the last territorial issue, i.e. the "three islands" problem. I am optimistic about the final issue being resolved. If both Russia and China cordially endeavor to resolve the problem, it could be undoubtedly done with a "win-win" deal not only for both governments but also for the local administrations, as fully illustrated throughout this book. It could be realized sooner at the coming Sino-Russian Summit (Remin ribao May 26, 2004; Jun. 30, 2004). From observation and analysis of the border negotiations, a possible "win-win" scenario could be the following: Russia could keep the two islands while China receives some other territories as collateral. When the deal is finished, my journey on the Sino-Russian border would reach its end. A new era in Sino-Russian relations must start from there.

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Segodnia
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Vladivostok
Xiboliya yanjiu
Xunke xianzhi, Harbin, 1991
Yuandong jingmao daobao
Zabaikal'skii rabochii

Interviews

*The following is a record of the author's border field research, including several crucial interviews with experts. I have excluded the regular exchange of opinions I had with scholars and journalists in Moscow, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Beijing and Harbin.

Feb. 19 - Mar. 7, 1994: Harbin, Heihe

Liu Zhongyuan, Deputy Director, Foreign Bureau of Heilongjiang Province
 Huo Qingxian, Director, Section on Policy Research for Border Economic Cooperation, Heihe City

Jul. 25 - Aug. 28, 1995: Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Heihe, Harbin, Suifenhe, Manzhouli

Huo Qingxian, Director, Section on Policy Research for Border Economic Cooperation, Heihe City
 Zhao Lianjun, Director, Section on Management for Border Economic Cooperation, Suifenhe City
 Zhao Peixing, Former Mayor of Heihe City

Aug. 20 - Sept. 21, 1996: Harbin, Suifenhe, Pogranichnyi, Ussuriisk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk

Deriabin A.A., Leading Specialist, Section on Foreign Economic Exchange, Administration of Pogranichnye Region

Aug. 21 - Sept. 3, 1997: Harbin, Blagoveshchensk, Heihe

Landyrev V.I., Director, Committee on International and Foreign Economic Exchanges, Administration of Amur Oblast
Huo Qingxian, Director, Section on Policy Research for Border Economic Cooperation, Heihe City

Jul. 11 - 23, 1998: Vladivostok, Pogranichnyi, Suifenhe, Dongning, Harbin, Manzhouli

Stegnii V., Deputy Governor, Vladivostok
Zhao Lianjun, Deputy Secretary, Dongning Section of Communist Party
Jin Zhao, Deputy Mayor, Manzhouli City

Jun. 20 - 27, 1999: Vladivostok, Khasan

Jul. 19 - 31, 1999: Harbin, Hulin, Hutou, Changchun, Tumen, Hunchun, Yanji

Chen Longshan, Director of Institute for Northeast Asian Studies, Jilin Academy of Social Science, Changchun

Oct. 18 - 22, 1999: Khabarovsk, Birobidzhan, Leninskoe, Golovino

Jul. 19 - Aug. 5, 2000: Harbin, Chita, Abagaitui, Zabaikal'sk, Manzhouli

Kos'ianenko O.N., Director, Section on Foreign Economic Exchanges, Administration of Chita City
Bandanov V.A., Deputy Head, Zabaikal'sk
Katanova G.A., Deputy Head, Zakaikal'sk
Burakos K.V., First Deputy Head, Zabaikal'sk Customs
Kanoplev A.P., First Deputy Head, Krasnokamensk City
Ren Yujiang, Deputy Chief Secretary, Manzhouli City

Sept. 17 - 21, 2000: Vladivostok, Ussuriisk, Lake Khanka, Turii Rog

Aug. 2 - 13, 2001: Harbin, Tongjiang, Fuyuan, Mishan, Raohe, Hulin

Sept. 1 - 6, 2001: Vladivostok, Dal'nerechensk, Bikin

Medvetskii G.N., Deputy Mayor of Dal'nerechensk City, Dal'nerechensk
Skachkova A.V., Director, Museum of History, Dal'nerechensk
Volik V.N., Leading Research Associate, Museum of History, Dal'nerechensk
Kekot' G.I., Deputy Mayor of Bikin City, Bikin
Litvinova O.A., Director, Bikin Museum
Iakovchuk S.M., Chief Editor, Newspaper *Bikinskii Vestnik*

May 2 - 26, 2002: Harbin, Mohe, Tahe, Huma, Heihe, Xunke, Jiayin, Luobei, Suibin, Tongjiang

Jun. 13 - 30, 2002: Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Skovorogino, Dzhalinga, Albazino, Blagoveshchensk, Heihe, Harbin, Suifenhe, Dongning, Pogranichnyi, Vladivostok

Petrova L.V., Head, Dzhalinga Administration

Filin V.V., Head, Albazino Administration

Index

- Abagaitui, 17, 157-159, 161-164, 168
 Agreement, 157
Afanas'ev, Evgenii, 27
Aigun Treaty, 2, 16, 17, 69, 72, 128,
 129, 141, 151, 157, 178
Albazin Fortress, 120, 122, 151
Albazino, 104, 119, 120, 122
Alexseev, Mikhail, 44, 139
Amur River, 4, 6, 7, 10, 15-18, 20,
 21, 23, 25, 26, 58, 60, 62, 64,
 69, 70-73, 75-79, 83, 90, 92-99,
 103-106, 111-113, 115, 117-
 120, 122, 123, 128, 129, 134,
 141, 142, 144, 145, 147, 149,
 151, 156, 157, 159, 161, 162,
 166-168, 192, 194
Amur Oblast, 6, 23, 26, 43, 100-102,
 104-106, 112, 117, 118, 120,
 129, 142, 147, 150, 152-154,
 189, 192
Amurzet, 96, 97, 99, 111, 112, 115,
 116
Angarsk, 122, 185
Argun River, 6, 7, 16-18, 24, 25, 69,
 74, 78, 92, 95, 104, 119, 122,
 123, 155-159, 161-166, 168,
 170, 175, 194
Beijing, 2, 10, 15, 21, 22, 27, 29, 30,
 36, 48, 73, 110, 140, 146, 152,
 164, 168, 171, 173, 184, 195
 Treaty, 2, 16, 17, 34, 69, 72-75,
 80, 82, 130, 157, 178
Bessmertnykh, Aleksandr, 10
Bikin, 83, 87-89, 99
Birobidzhan, 93, 99, 114-117
Blagoslovennoe, 115
Blagoveshchensk, 1, 4, 10, 13, 43,
 92, 98, 100, 103, 104, 111, 112,
 117-119, 129, 130, 141-144,
 146-154, 189
Bol'shoi Island (Chita), 16, 17, 24,
 78, 95, 158, 162-167, 170
Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii (Heixiazi)
 Island, 16, 17, 21, 24-26, 60,
 69-72, 74-76, 79, 90, 99, 106,
 167, 171
Boxer Rebellion, 110, 129, 130
Brezhnev, Leonid, 55
"brick," 146-149
Bu Ping, 56
Bura Agreement, 157
Changlingzi, 38, 53, 54, 83
Changying, 104, 120
Chaoyang, 98, 111, 112, 117
Chen Duxiu, 168
Chengjin, 37
Cheremushkiny Island, 101, 102,
 106, 108
Cherniaevo, 68, 70, 104
Chernomyrdin, Viktor, 24, 27, 184
Chinese Eastern Railway incidents,
 68, 72, 97, 113, 131, 162
"Chinese migration," 5, 13, 24, 42,
 44, 89, 137, 139, 153, 156, 190-
 192, 195
"Chinese threat," 3, 13, 44, 55, 89,
 144, 153, 163, 170, 173, 189-
 192,
Chita Oblast, 6, 24, 104, 119, 122,
 154, 156, 159, 163, 165, 166,
 170, 171, 190, 192
Cold War, 4, 36, 40, 56, 127, 179
 post-, 2, 5, 30, 37, 40
Cultural Revolution, 58, 179
Daheihe Island, 125, 142-146, 149,
 150
Dal'nerechensk, 58, 61, 81, 87, 88
Dalian, 36, 53
Damanskii (Zhenbao) Island, 10, 16,
 30, 58-67, 89, 197
 Incident, 7, 55, 59, 60, 64, 65, 73,
 87, 92, 96, 100, 103, 110, 129,
 132, 178, 196
Dangbi, 85, 86
Dandong, 55
demarcation work, 5-7, 15, 17-22,
 24-26, 28, 29, 31, 47, 60, 62,
 64, 67, 68, 72, 83, 88, 89, 93,
 107, 160, 161, 164, 165, 171,
 187, 191

- Deng Xiaoping, 10, 11, 41, 127, 134, 191
- Diatlov, Victor, 190
- Dong Xiaoyang, 30
- Dongning, 52, 80-83, 85, 131, 132, 138-141, 146
- Dzhalinda, 104, 111, 112, 118, 120-122
- Ekaterino-Nikol'skoe, 96, 99, 111
- Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA), 40, 41, 47, 51, 55, 174
- Erka, 158, 159, 164, 168
- Evraskha Island, 20, 21, 93-95, 106
- Faingov Island, 65
- Far East Hotel, 43, 150-153
- "Four plus One," 179, 180
- Fuyuan, 62-64, 68-72, 76, 77, 83, 90, 93, 94, 99, 112, 114
- Ganchazi (Sychevskii) Island, 98, 101, 107-111
- Incident, 101, 102, 109
- Gel'bras Vilia, 190, 191
- Geniatulin, Ravil, 167, 171
- Gol'bakh, Aleksandr, 21, 24, 26, 44
- Gol'dinskii (Bacha) Island, 62, 92, 93
- Golovino, 93, 94, 99
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, 2, 10, 31, 36, 58, 74, 133, 178, 179
- Grodekovo, 130, 131, 137, 143
- Hailar River, 156, 158, 159, 162, 163
- Harbin, 56, 68, 90, 93, 98, 114, 116, 126, 130, 132-134, 136, 145, 174
- Hayu Island, 93, 114
- Hegang, 98, 115-117
- Heihe, 1, 7, 10, 11, 13, 40, 48, 55, 85, 98, 103-105, 110-113, 117-119, 122, 126-130, 134, 137, 138, 141-152, 169, 196
- Ribao, 141
- Heilongjiang Province, 7, 11, 36, 52, 56, 76, 79, 80, 84-86, 88, 89, 104, 113-116, 118-120, 122-128, 132, 134, 136, 137, 139, 142, 144-147, 174, 187
- Heishantou, 156, 157, 159, 161
- Honda Ryoichi, 43
- Hu Yaobang, 133, 142, 168
- Hulin, 61-63, 83, 85-87
- Hulun River, 162, 164
- Huma, 104, 105, 111-113, 119
- Hunchun, 11, 29, 35-38, 40, 41, 47, 48, 51-55, 80, 169
- Hutou, 61, 66, 87
- Inner Mongol Autonomous Region, 7, 11, 104, 156, 159, 161, 167, 173, 175, 185, 187
- Ishaev, Viktor, 21-23, 25, 76
- Ishimitsu Makiyo, 129, 131
- Jewish Autonomous Oblast, 6, 16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 92-96, 100, 106, 112, 114-117
- Jiamusi, 76, 98, 115, 116, 126
- Jiang Zemin, 9, 10, 27, 29, 30, 47, 78, 168, 181
- Jiayin, 98, 100, 105, 111-113, 116, 117
- Jilin Province, 7, 36, 37, 46, 51-53
- Jin Zhao, 174
- Jixiang, 86
- "joint economic zone," 140, 142-144, 168-173, 189
- "joint use" of the disputed islands, 23-26, 28, 76, 102, 165-168
- Kalinino, 98, 101
- Kamen'-Rybolov, 61, 81, 85
- Kamenushka (Cheluwanzi) Island, 101
- Kapitsa, Mikhail, 58, 73, 110, 111
- Karasin, Grigorii, 27-29, 31
- Kazakevich, Petr, 69
- Kazakevichevo, 70, 71, 77, 79, 90, 188
- (Fuyuan) Channel, 69-71, 73, 74, 77, 79, 90
- Kedrovo, 67
- Kekot', Gennadii, 89
- Khabarovsk, 4, 15, 17, 22, 26, 43, 68, 69, 71, 76, 77, 79, 83, 85, 90, 99, 112, 115, 116, 153
- Krai, 6, 14, 21-24, 26, 68, 69, 72, 76-79, 83, 89, 93, 95, 114, 136,

150, 153, 162, 167, 170, 171,
 185, 186, 192
 Khasan, 18, 20-22, 24, 27, 28, 30,
 31, 33, 35, 38, 39, 44-51, 53-56,
 68, 69, 79-81, 83, 105-107, 168
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 60, 73
 Kiakhta, 156, 157, 161
 Treaty, 157, 161
 Kim Il Sung, 55, 168
 Kim Jung Il, 52, 55
 Kireev, Genrikh, 25, 27, 68, 83, 164
 Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, 185
 Konstantinovka, 98, 102, 112
 Konstantinovskii (Wangamuhe)
 Island, 101, 102, 106, 108
 Kosygin, Aleksei, 59, 110, 111
 Kovykta, 185
 Kozyrev, Andrei, 164
 Kraskino, 38, 48, 51-53, 83
 Krasnokamensk, 159, 166
 Kutsuzov (Daxitong) Island, 65
 Kuznetsov, Vladimirmir, 42
 Lake Khanka, 6, 18, 19, 61, 62, 80,
 81, 83-86
 "lantern," 146-150
 Larin, Viktor, 42, 46, 47, 56, 147,
 154, 190, 191
 Lebed, Aleksandr, 24
 Leninskoe, 21, 94, 114
 Lesozavodsk, 61, 62, 79, 86
 Li Chuanxun, 56, 79, 136, 186
 Li Dazhao, 168
 Li Peng, 48, 83, 168
 Lianyin, 104, 111, 112, 120, 121
 Liaoning Province, 36, 186
 Liu Huaqing, 28
 Liu Shaoqi, 168
 Lu Nanquan, 184
 Lugovskoi Island, 20, 93, 94
 Lukin, Vladimir, 3, 25
 Luobei, 96-98, 100, 105, 107, 110-
 113, 115-117
 Luoguhe, 104, 119, 122
 Maksun (Dalengban) Island, 65, 66
 Manchu, 4, 129, 130
 Manchukuo, 36, 65, 69, 72, 82, 83,
 96, 101, 109, 132, 160
 Manilov, Aleksandr, 21
 Manzhouli, 11, 17, 40, 48, 55, 90,
 134, 140, 157-159, 168-174,
 177, 185
 Mao Zedong, 92, 130, 168
 marker "E," 34, 35
 marker (Letter) "O," 81-82, 138
 marker (Letter) "P," 18, 24, 28, 80,
 81
 marker "T," 34, 46, 50, 80
 Markovo (Amur), 104, 111
 Markovo (Primor'e), 61, 83, 86
 Matsievskaiia, 159, 160
 Medvetskii, Gennadii, 58
 Menggutun Island, 102
 Menkeseli, 16, 24, 25, 102, 155, 158,
 164-168
 Miasnikov, Vladimir, 65, 71, 107
 Minakir, Pavel, 186, 187
 Mingshan, 96, 97, 99, 111, 112, 115-
 117
 Mishan, 61, 80, 82-86, 114, 147
 "style," 114, 145
 Mogochoa, 104, 120
 Mohe, 98, 104, 105, 110-113, 119,
 122
 Mongolia, 7, 11, 16, 17, 41, 123,
 156, 160, 161, 164, 167, 173,
 175, 178, 185, 187
 Moscow, 10, 14, 15, 22, 23, 27, 28,
 44, 49, 55, 73, 109, 115, 146,
 152, 164, 171, 173, 180, 187,
 189-192
 Mudanjiang, 81, 136, 138, 139
 Muling, 80, 81, 130
 "multi-polar world," 2
 Nakhodka, 41, 46, 47, 51, 53
 Namyang, 52
 Na-stvorakh Island, 20, 93, 94
 NATO, 3, 181, 196
 Nazdratenko, Evgenii, 6, 18-24, 30,
 42, 44, 46, 47, 83, 164, 192
 Nemtsov, Boris, 171
 Nerchinsk, 122, 156, 159
 Treaty, 123, 156, 157, 164
 Nesterushkin, Valerii, 27
 Nizhneleninskoe, 93, 94, 99, 114, 116

- Nizhnepetrovskie Island, 20, 93, 94
 North Korea, 16, 34, 36-41, 46, 49-52, 54, 55, 79, 178
 Ol'ginskii (Longzhan) Island, 16, 26, 102, 104, 105, 107, 166, 167
 operation "Foreigner," 43, 44, 144, 189
 Panov, Aleksandr, 19
 Pashkovo, 98, 100, 112, 116, 117
 Perekatnyi (Huangtuaizi) Island, 102, 106
 Pogranichnyi, 81, 83, 93, 133, 137, 138, 140, 149
 Poiarkovo, 98, 108, 109, 143
 Poiarkovskaia Channel, 108, 109
 Pokrovka (Chita), 104, 120, 168
 Pokrovka (Primor'e), 66, 81, 88, 89
 Poltavka, 80-83, 138-140
 Polutov, Andrei, 19, 192
 Popov Island, 20, 26, 91, 93-95, 106, 107, 167
 Pos'et, 37, 38, 41, 48
 Primakov, Evgenii, 20
 Primor'e Krai, 6, 18, 25, 34, 37, 43, 44, 55, 79, 83, 85, 136, 139, 150, 186
 Qian Qichen, 10, 164
 Qike, 98, 108, 112, 117, 118
 Qindeli, 94, 95
 Qing Dynasty, 4, 34, 115, 117, 156
 Qiqihar, 98, 104, 126
 Agreement, 157, 160-162, 166
 Rajin, 37, 38, 41, 49, 51
 Rakhmanin, Vladimir, 47, 68, 69
 Rakhmonov, Emomali, 181
 Raohe, 61-63, 65-67, 83, 87-89, 122
 Razdol'naia (Suifen) River, 81, 82, 130
 Razdol'noe, 80, 81
 "reform and openness," 5, 11, 36, 41, 54, 113, 127, 128, 132, 142, 163
 Renmin Ribao, 74, 132
 Rozov, Valerii, 20
 Russian Empire, 34, 74, 78, 110
 Rybkin, Ivan, 24
 Sagibovo, 98, 111
 Sakhalinskii Island, 63, 69, 70
 Samarkon Island, 97, 100, 105
 Sanchakou, 80, 81, 130, 131, 138-140
 Sanjiang Plain, 93, 115
 Savel'ev Island, 20, 91, 93-95, 167
 Sazanii Island, 20, 93, 94
 Sea of Japan, 25, 34, 36, 37, 44, 46, 50, 81
 Rim, 40, 41
 Seanbong, 37, 38, 41, 49, 51
 Sedykh, Vitalii, 43
 Seoul, 52
 September 11 in 1969, 59, 110
 Shanghai, 23, 126, 170, 173, 178-182, 184
 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 3, 181-183
 "Shanghai Five," 179-182
 Shenyang, 186
 Shenzhen, 142, 149
 Sheremet'ev, 67
 Sheremet'evskii (Dapaozi) Island, 66-70, 107
 Shevardnadze, Edvard, 74
 Shi Ze, 183, 184, 187
 Shigemitsu Mamoru, 101
 Shilka River, 6, 104, 120, 123, 156, 159, 161
 Shiwei, 157, 159, 161, 175
 Shuttle trade, 11-13, 42-44, 133-137, 144-149, 187-190
 Sijizhen, 98, 112
 Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of 2001, 3, 78, 195
 Sino-Soviet (Russian) Eastern Border Agreement in 1991, 6, 7, 14, 16-19, 21-24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 34, 36, 45-47, 49, 58, 59, 69, 75, 77, 80, 82, 83, 93, 95, 106, 107, 160, 164-167
 Skovorodino, 104, 120, 122
 socialism, 2, 11, 34
 Songhua River, 92, 93, 96, 105, 111-114, 145
 "special economic zone," 41, 54, 89, 114-115, 127, 133-136, 139,

- 142-145, 168-172, 189
- Stegnii, Vladimir, 27, 28, 48, 82
- Stepanovskii (Weizigou) Island, 65, 66
- “strategic partnership,” 2-4, 22, 23, 25, 29-31, 183
- Strozhevoi (Tuanshanzi) Island, 65, 66, 88
- Suibin, 96, 97, 99, 105, 107, 110
- Suifenhe, 7, 11, 40, 48, 52, 53, 55, 80, 81, 83, 85, 120, 127, 128, 130-134, 136-141, 146, 149, 169, 174
- Sukhoi Island, 20, 93, 94
- Sungacha River, 61, 62, 79, 80, 86
- Sunwu, 98, 102-105, 100, 108, 112, 113
- Tahe, 104, 105, 112, 119
- Tarabarov Island, 16, 17, 20, 21, 24-26, 60, 62, 70-72, 74-77, 90, 93, 95, 99, 167, 171
- Tarbagan-Dakh, 156, 157, 159, 160
- Thalweg, 17, 60, 67, 73, 74
- Titarenko, Mikhail, 77
- Tkachenko, Boris, 35, 46, 82, 83, 107, 160, 162, 164
- Tongjiang, 70, 90, 92-94, 96, 99, 105, 106, 112-116
- Trans-Baikal, 21, 24, 27, 163
- Tsurukhaitui, 156, 157, 159, 161, 167
- Tumen, 38, 52, River, 7, 10, 15, 18, 20, 21, 25, 33-38, 40-42, 45-47, 49-52, 54-56, 75, 79-90
- Turii Rog, 61, 81-84, 86, 147
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 37
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), 37
- Ushakovo, 104, 112, 119
- Ussuri River, 2, 4, 6, 7, 15-18, 26, 27, 34, 57, 58, 60-66, 68-73, 75-80, 83, 86-90, 92, 93, 95, 99, 106, 111, 122, 130, 162, 166, 167, 188, 192, 194
- Ussuriisk, 18, 20-22, 27, 28, 30, 53, 81, 86, 106, 130, 136-139, 188, 189
- Utinye (Machang) Island, 65
- Vereshchagin, Boris, 21, 58, 73, 75, 93, 95, 106, 107, 110, 162
- Verkhne-konstantinovskii (Amuhe) Island, 102
- Vladivostok, 4, 10, 11, 18, 20, 22, 23, 35, 37, 41-43, 45-47, 53, 55, 74, 81, 83, 85, 130, 136-139, 153, 157, 171, 174, 189, 190, 192
- “Free Trade Zone,” 37, 42
- Wonsan, 52
- Wu Dacheng, 35
- Wusuzhen, 70, 76-78, 188
- Xilinji, 104, 119, 120
- Xingan, 104, 120
- Xingkai Agreement, 34, 69
- Xinxingdong Island, 65
- Xunke, 98, 101-103, 105-107, 111-113, 118
- Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region, 34, 52
- Yanji, 37, 52
- Yel'tsin, Boris, 19-23, 27-31, 47, 48, 59, 95, 167, 171
- Yichun, 98, 117
- Yin Jianping, 113, 128
- Yuandong Jingmao Daobao, 136
- Yuanting, 38, 51
- Zabaikal'sk, 17, 79, 90, 158, 159, 168-173, 177, 185, 189
- Zalivnoi (Qilibi) Island, 65, 66
- Zarubino, 37, 39, 47, 51-53
- Zarubinskii (Dali) Island, 65, 66
- Zeia River, 92, 98, 103, 104, 143
- Zhalainor, 158, 159, 162
- Zhang Furu, 127
- Zhao Peixing, 142
- Zhao Lianjun, 138
- Zhao Lizhi, 186, 187, 189
- Zhaoxing, 96, 99
- Zhongxing, 96, 97, 99
- Zhou Enlai, 59, 110, 168
- Zhu Rongji, 168, 184

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